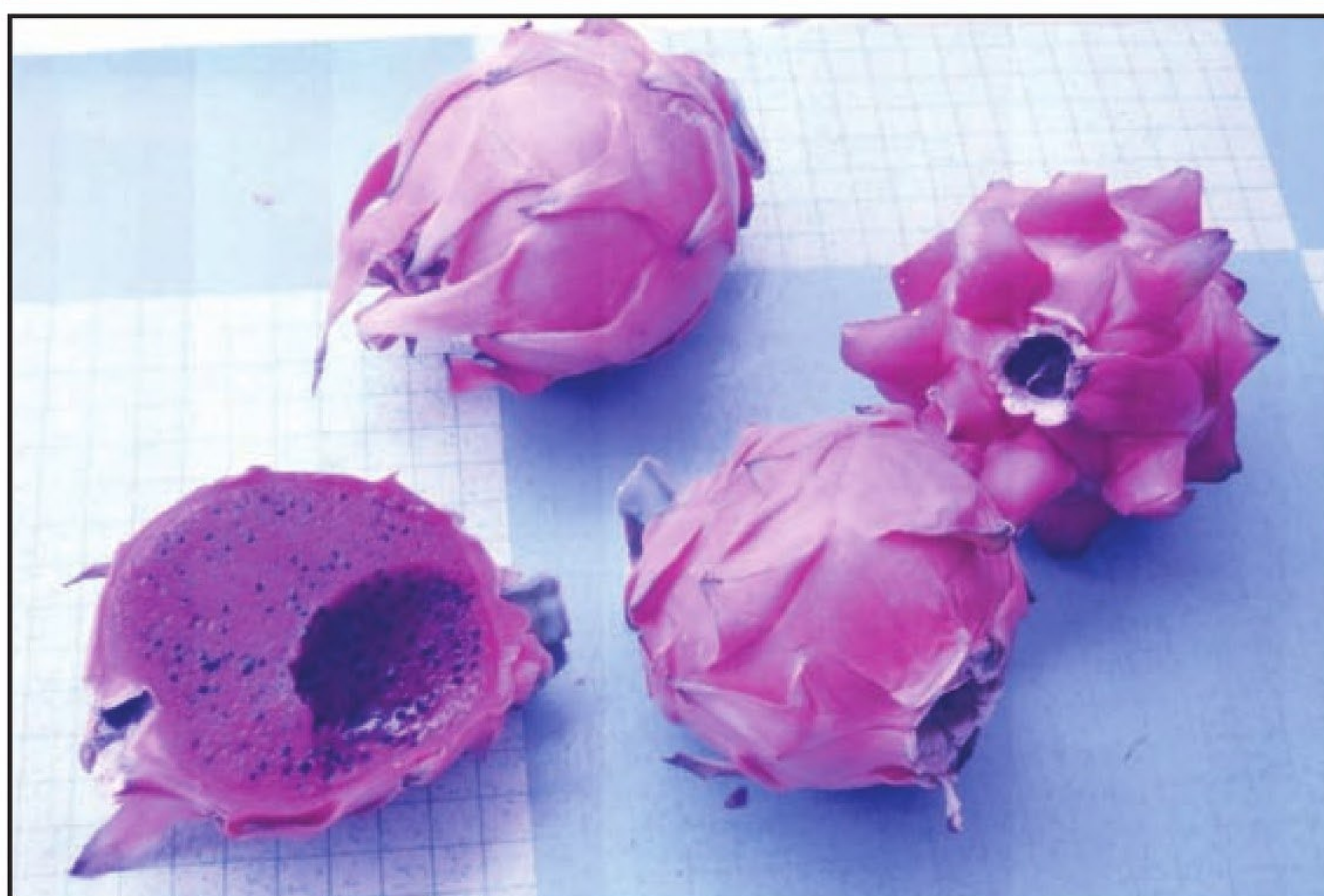


Introducing the Dragon Fruit to Aruba



Do not let the name Dragon Fruit scare you or turn you off. Because, in truth, it is as beautiful as a rose, and is so good eating that in some countries it is called **The King of Fruits**.

It is believed by some people that this name originated in Southeast Asia because when it was introduced there

from South America, the well-to-do fell in love with it and prized it. They, therefore scared off the common folks by relating it to dragons. Others say the plant owes its name to its dragon-like traits: multi-branched, ferociously-spiked, strangling anything living or dead it gets attached to.

However, elsewhere, it has benign names: Pitaya in Venezuela; Pitahaya in Colombia; Indian Apple in the U.S. Its scientific name is *Cereus triangularis* of the family Cactacea (cactus). A cactus plant with a delicious fruit? Unbelievable. On Aruba we spurn cunucu cacti as they were a source of pain, not pleasure. And eating any part of them by us, apple-loving, peach-loving, apricot-loving people, would be belittling. Better leave it to the bird, bats, goats, and iguanas. But, you'd be surprised to learn that this fruit is now prized world-wide. For example, here's what an internet contributor in Malaysia wrote: "It is a goldmine fruit..." And another: "My mom planted a dragon Fruit as part of her hobby,

and now it turned out to be a rewarding hobby by selling it to friends and neighbors." And another: "Yes, Dragon Fruit grows in Massachusetts. It is truly the king of fruits.

The Dragon Fruit plant is quite similar to our common climbing-type cacti. It is multi-branched, each branch made up of short seg-

ments off which other segments grow, total length as long as two meters. The plant is octopus-like. Each branch has three ridges which are heavily spiked. Four or five times a year spectacular large, lily-like flowers appear at night. The flowers look like maidens draped in long, velvet-like, seductive skirts. Better look quickly or not at all because within a few hours the skirts wither, turn black and fall off. Then the sepals at the base curl over the embryo providing shelter and protection as it matures. When fully mature, the fruit is perfectly round, about 8 cm, and looks like a flaming red rose. But without smell, as if "Made in China." In this virgin state it resists picking.

Once picked all one has to do is to peel off the sepals, slit the fruit in two, and drool over the tightly-packed, blood-red flesh. Scoop it out and eat – flesh and its many little black seeds. All that is



left in your hands is a little plastic-like bowl. Then, set the bowl aside for use later. Mix flesh with pureed mango and some sugar. Return mixture into skin and serve chilled and topped with whipped cream. Ah!

Note: The above fruit description applies to the red variety of Dragon Fruit (*Cereus traingularis*, specie *costaricensis*. The yellow variety (specie *megalanthus*) has yellow skin and white flesh, and is oval, smaller than the red, unattractive, but slightly sweeter. Both varieties are now growing well at Cunucu di Jimmy in Tanki Flip

Because Dragon Fruit is so much at home in Aruba should we not lay some claim to it and give it a name of our own? **Kadushi Bunita Diablo**, for example?

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